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# GEORGE C. MARSHALL, AN INTERVIEW WITH A STRATEGIC LEADER

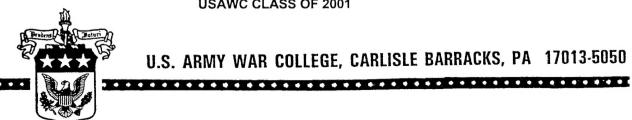
BY

KATHY L. HENNES **National Security Agency** 

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## USAWC STRATEGY RESEARCH PROJECT

## George C. Marshall, An Interview With a Strategic Leader

by

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The views expressed in this academic research paper are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of the U.S. Government, the Department of Defense, or any of its agencies.

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### **ABSTRACT**

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This paper is an imaginary interview with General George C. Marshall on his views of strategic leadership. General Marshall was a great strategic leader and through his skills he was able to help the nation through preparations for World War II, the difficulties of wartime, and through rebuilding after the war.

He was a political soldier who was able to deal with Congressmen and Senators as easily as he dealt with soldiers and was in turn greatly respected by all. He had close working relationships with Presidents Roosevelt and Truman. He was a great visionary who foresaw the vital nature of air power and supported it fully. He realized the importance of joint operations and cooperation with the Navy and Air Forces and was merciless to any commander who could not work with other services. He was a great communicator and effectively communicated inside and out of both his military and civilian chains of command. He felt it was his duty to keep all informed, including the American people whose help he realized was critical to the war effort and to his ability to sell his European recovery plan. He was mentored by some of America's great generals and in turn passed on what he learned to his protégé's.

The impacts of General George Marshall's extraordinary strategic leadership abilities left a lasting mark on history. His skills and abilities ensured a trained, equipped and organized American army was victorious in Europe and the Pacific during World War II. The men who lead that army were, with few exceptions, hand-picked by General Marshall. His vision for Europe after the War that resulted in the Marshall Plan saved the Western Europeans from economic collapse and political turmoil. General Marshall was a great strategic military leader and statesman in war and peace.

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## GEORGE C. MARSHALL, AN INTERVIEW WITH A STRATEGIC LEADER

INTERVIEWER: Good morning, ladies and gentlemen. We are welcoming today General George Catlett Marshall to the U.S. Army War College. General Marshall was a great strategic leader and through his skills he was able to help the nation through preparations for World War II, the difficulties of wartime, and through rebuilding after the war. General Marshall did not learn his strategic leadership skills through schooling. He was a great believer in learning from experience and cited the knowledge he gained from his leadership positions as a student in the Virginia Military Institute as having a great impact on his later leadership abilities. He was not a great fan of military schools with their droning lectures and was instrumental in improving the curriculum at the infantry school at Ft. Benning and the Command and General Staff College at Ft. Leavenworth to incorporate more hands on learning.

General Marshall learned his great strategic leadership skills from experience at his various military positions and from his superiors both good and bad. He was able to discern what worked well and what did not and then incorporate what he learned into his own leadership style. Early in his career his assignments to the Philippines, France, and China taught him the importance of international relations and working with foreign governments and different cultures. He spent many years with the reserve components learning their value to the regular army and developing his ideas about the citizen soldier. He developed his interpersonal and political skills while dealing with state adjutant generals and governors.

The examples General Marshall had of strategic leaders were many. He studied the great leaders of the American Civil War including Grant and Stonewall Jackson. He served under such illustrious generals as Pershing and Summerall. These generals were not only examples for him to follow but mentors who encouraged him and watched over his development. General Marshall later passed on the skills he learned to Generals he mentored such as Eisenhower, Mc Nair, and Bradley.

General Marshall has come here today to discuss his views on strategic leadership in his own words and to give us his opinion on what makes a good strategic leader. Ladies and gentlemen, please welcome General George Marshall.

GENERAL MARSHALL ENTERS AND CROSSES STAGE TO INTERVIEWER

GENERAL MARSHALL: Thank you. I am very glad to be here at the War College today.

INTERVIEWER: General, let us begin with a general discussion of leadership. How do
you define leadership and can you give us some examples of good leaders you have worked
with?

GENERAL MARSHALL: [Certainly. Let me start by saying] aggressive and determined leadership, from the purely military point of view, is the final determining factor in warfare. Genuine discipline, sound training, suitable munitions and adequate numbers are essentials, but they will be ineffective without the dominating influence of strong leadership. Deficiencies are made good by leadership. Difficulties are overcome by leadership. Military victories depend upon leadership. You have to lead men in war by requiring more from the individual than he thinks he can do. You have to lead men in war by bringing them along to endure and to display qualities of fortitude that are beyond the average man's thought of what he should be expected to do. You have to inspire them when they are hungry and exhausted and desperately uncomfortable and in great danger.<sup>2</sup> Leadership in a military emergency is, in my opinion, the most important single consideration. The difficulties of leadership which existed in 1917-18 have been enormously multiplied today by the increased mobility and fire power of modern armies, and the necessity for vigorous commanders is greater now than it has ever been before. The paramount combat lesson learned from every operation is the vital importance of leadership.... Aggressive and determined leadership is the priceless factor which inspires a command and upon which all success in battle depends.4

To be a highly successful leader in war four things are essential, assuming that you possess good common sense, have studied your profession and are physically strong. When conditions are difficult, the command is depressed and everyone seems critical and pessimistic, you must be especially cheerful and optimistic. When evening comes and all are exhausted, hungry and possibly dispirited, particularly in unfavorable weather at the end of a march or in battle, you must put aside any thought of personal fatigue and display marked energy in looking after the comfort of your organization, inspecting your lines and preparing for tomorrow. Make a point of extreme loyalty, in thought and deed, to your chiefs personally; and in your efforts to carry out their plans or policies, the less you approve the more energy you must direct to their accomplishment. The more alarming and disquieting the reports received or the conditions viewed in battle, the more determined must be your attitude. Never ask for the relief of your unit and never hesitate to attack. The most important factor of all is character, which involves integrity, unselfish and devoted purpose, a sturdiness of bearing when everything goes wrong and all are critical, and a willingness to sacrifice self in the interest of the common good.

INTERVIEWER: You have worked with many great leaders in your day, both military and civilian. You have been privileged to know and associate with several great U.S. generals such as Pershing, Eisenhower and Bradley as well as British generals such as John Dill. Can you tell

us what made them great leaders? We can start with General John Pershing. You were his aide-de-camp during World War I.

any gathering where he was. He was a tremendous driver, if necessary; a very kindly, likeable man on off-duty status but very stern on a duty basis. I have never seen a man who could listen to [so] much criticism- as long as it was constructive criticism and wasn't just being irritable or something of that sort. You could talk to him like you were discussing somebody in the next country and yet you were talking about him personally...You could say what you pleased as long as it was straight, constructive criticism. And he did not hold it against you for an instant. I never saw another commander that I could do that with. Their sensitivity clouded them up, so it just wouldn't work. I have seen some I could be very frank with, but I never could be frank to the degree that I could with General Pershing.

I would like to tell you a story of an incident that occurred while General Pershing was army chief of staff that describes his character. [I don't really recall what it was but] something came up. General Harbord was deputy chief of staff then, and he brought it to General Pershing. They were going to change this. General Pershing had a way of sending most all of these things into me and nobody knew about it. All he would put on the paper was 'Colonel M.' Then it was up to me to take a look at it and tell him what I thought. But that was never betrayed outside of the office, that I was put into this position of maybe criticizing my superiors. Well, in this particular case, he had decided in agreement with General Harbord. It was about something that General March [had] done, and they were changing it, and I thought they were entirely wrong. [At the time there was a feud going on between Pershing and March]. When I got the paper with "Colonel M' on it, I dictated a little memorandum to General Pershing to that effect-why I thought they were wrong and so on.

General Pershing sent for me and when I came in, he said, "I don't take to this at all - I don't agree with you.' 'Well,' I said, 'let me have it, General, again, let me have it. I didn't express myself well.' I took it back [to my office] and very carefully drew up my resume of the affair and why I thought it was wrong. He sent for me again and he said, 'I don't accept this. I think Harbord and I are right.' I was very much upset because I thought it was entirely wrong, and I said, 'Well now, General, I have done a poor job on this; let me have that paper again.' So I took it back and rewrote the whole thing to give it a brand new flavor, and then I took it in and handed it to him. He read it, and he put it down and said, 'No!' And as I recall he slapped his hand on the desk, which is something I had never had him do before, and said, "No, by God, we will do it this way.'

I got the paper back into my hand - I remember this pretty clearly – [and] said, 'Now General, just because you hate the guts of General March, you're setting yourself up - and General Harbord, who hates him, too - to do something you know damn well is wrong.' He looked at me and handed me the paper .... and said, 'Well, have it your own way.' That was the end of this scene where he was bitterly determined to do this, and yet he ended up by saying, 'Have it your own way,' which I thought was very remarkable. No prolonged feeling. Nothing. That was the end of the affair. I don't think it was the end of the affair so far as General Harbord was concerned. But General Pershing held no [grudges] at all. He might be very firm at the time, but if you convinced him, that was the end of that. He accepted that and you went ahead.<sup>9</sup>

INTERVIEWER: Another great military leader of your time was General Eisenhower who later went on to become President. You were considered to be his mentor and him, your protégé. When Eisenhower talked about the root causes of his success he usually spoke of three men, Walter B. Smith, Omar N. Bradley, and George C. Marshall. At the end of World War II, General Eisenhower wrote to you to try to express his feelings of gratitude for your support. He wrote: "I feel a compulsion to attempt to tell you some things personally that have been very real with me during this war. Since the day I first went to England, indeed since I first reported to you in the War Department, the strongest weapon that I have always had in my hand was a confident feeling that you trusted my judgment, believed in the objectivity of my approach to any problem and were ready to sustain to the full limit of your resources and your tremendous moral support, anything that we found necessary to undertake.... [That you] had a basic faith in this headquarters and would invariably resist interference from any outside sources, has done far more to strengthen my personal position throughout the war than is realized even by those people who were affected by this circumstance... Our army and our people have never been so deeply indebted to any other soldier."

GENERAL MARSHALL: [I had a strong belief in Eisenhower's capabilities and supported him to the best of my ability. When he first came to work for me as a staff officer in the War Plans Division of the General Staff of the War Department, he was a newly promoted Brigadier General and I was the Army Chief of Staff. This was in December 1941, right after Pearl Harbor. I looked him in the eye and said,] 'Eisenhower, the Department is filled with able men who analyze their problems well but feel compelled always to bring them to me for final solution. I must have assistants who will solve their own problems and tell me later what they have done'. [I grew to admire and respect Eisenhower more and more precisely because he was willing and able to make the hard decisions himself without bothering me]. [1]

[During the War he] commanded with outstanding success the most powerful military force that [had] ever been assembled. [As a strategic leader, Eisenhower] met and successfully disposed of every conceivable difficulty incident to varied national interests and international political problems of unprecedented complications... [As an operational leader, he overcame inconceivable logistical problems and military obstacles.] Through all of this..., [he was] selfless in [his] actions, always sound and tolerant in [his] judgments and altogether admirable in the courage and wisdom of [his] military decisions. [Eisenhower] made history, great history for the good of mankind and... stood for all we hope for and admire in an officer of the United States Army.<sup>12</sup>

**INTERVIEWER**: General, will you discuss with us your observations on strategy and strategic leaders?

**GENERAL MARSHALL**: When I was a young officer, when I was being educated in the military profession, [and] in my early career and up through middle age, we thought of strategy more or less as a diagrammatic proposition. We figured it out in relation to logistics, as to rivers and railroads. In the main, when we got down to the tactics of it, [we figured out] which side of the hill you went up - and matters of that kind - as you sometimes read in connection with the battles in the Civil War. Gettysburg, for example, [or] operations of that kind.

My education was sadly neglected.<sup>13</sup> It became clear to me at the age of 58, I would have to learn new tricks that were not taught in the military manuals or on the battlefield...[I became] a political soldier and...[had] to put my training in rapping out orders and making snap decisions on the back burner, and [had] to learn the arts of persuasion and guile. I [had to] become an expert in a whole new set of skills.<sup>14</sup> [I became] more - far more - deeply concerned over matters of ship-building, over matters of landing craft, over matters of engines for them, over matters of octane gas and the means of producing [it]--over all those thousands and one details that are necessary in order that we [could] bring out [our] great forces to bear.<sup>15</sup>

[In the years between the two World Wars, I found myself deeply involved in the problems of preparing the nation for war again.] My own thought [was] that as the situation [grew] more critical abroad we ought, step by step - not in a single plunge to repeat those past mistakes in our history where we have gotten indigestion from trying to do everything at once at the last moment - but step by step, to do those things which [would] put us in a little stronger position; to do those things which are most important to be done, so that the military advisors of other governments [would] recognize our immediate strength and grow cautious accordingly.<sup>16</sup>

[The first important consideration I was greatly concerned with was industrial preparedness.] Remember that almost every weapon of war [we had at the time], certainly

every gun - big or little - and every device for aiming and firing that gun, like the elaborate instruments necessary for anti-aircraft artillery, require[d] a year to a year-and-a-half to manufacture. So, no matter how many billions of dollars Congress places at our disposal on the day [a] war is declared, they will not buy ten cents worth of war materiel for delivery under twelve months, and a great deal of it will require a year-and-a-half to manufacture. In other words, whatever your son and my son is to use to defend himself and to defend us and the Country, has to be manufactured in time of peace. We [had] models of the best weapons and mechanical devices, we [thought], in the world, and we [had] the finest aircraft in design and performance; but what we [needed] was the accumulation of an adequate reserve of this materiel, not just some popular item, but a balanced program suitable for the instant arming of our first modest war army, in the event of trouble. Our primary need [was] materiel, everything else,[or so I thought at the time, was] of secondary importance. <sup>17</sup> [I firmly believed] that we must never be caught in the same situation we found ourselves in 1917 [during the first World War.]

I recall the first time the American troops were put into line [in that war]. They went in by battalions, and it fell to me to make the arrangements. We literally borrowed everything that was loose in France. Some items we didn't even borrow. We had no rolling kitchens; we didn't have this, and we didn't have that. I remember that some of the staff from the great GHQ, to which we looked in reverence rather as the rising sun and all the powers inherent in it, came down to inspect our departure, and were horrified because some of the soldiers had cut the brims off their campaign hats and were wearing the remaining crowns; others wore headgear made from bath towels, for with the steel helmet they had to have something that could be folded. Some of them had the Belgian kepi, probably because it had a gold tassel dangling in front. But we went into line in that shape for our first experience—everything begged, borrowed, or stolen—certainly not manufactured in America. That was a trying experience, a complicated affair to manage. Later, I became involved in movements of troops up into the hundreds of thousands, but the problem didn't approximate the difficulties of managing that small first group of the First Division, of which nothing was normal except the fact that the men were Americans and they were willing to fight. <sup>18</sup>

[The second important consideration I had to work out was manpower, to get enough trained men in to the Army at the right time and with the right skills.] I urged then that the Regular establishment be brought up by a small sum of 15,000 men, whose importance was out of all proportion to the small number involved, because it meant the rounding out of organizations [then already] in existence. I had in mind when I spoke of step by step, the further

increase of the Regular establishment to 280,000 and beyond, and, of course the eventual mobilization of the National Guard.<sup>19</sup>

Personnel [became] our most serious deficiency, in the light of the requirements that [were] being brought to bear on the War Department particularly [after the German invasion of Norway], and the necessity of having seasoned, trained men, who could use the new weapons effectively and immediately and with a state of discipline that [would make] them completely dependable. I [had] struggled in the past to hold the personnel requirements down because ... materiel is a permanent asset, good for 20 or 25 years, with a low cost of maintenance and, whatever the economies that may be forced on us, we would still have the materiel on hand to capitalize our manpower at a later day. But ...the situation ...changed and personnel [became] the only thing, in a large measure, that [could] produce immediate results, within a period, roughly, of 6 months.<sup>20</sup>

[Even though manpower policy consumed a great deal of my time and attention,] I was much criticized because I didn't take the lead in the selective service legislation, [the Burke-Wadsworth selective compulsory military training and service bill submitted to Congress at the urging of a group of civilians associated with the Military Training Camps Association]. I very pointedly did not take the lead. I wanted it to come from others...Then I could take the floor and do all the urging that was required. But if I had led off with this urging, I would have defeated myself before I started. [I had to be careful] not to create the feeling [that] as the military leader, [I] was trying to force the country into a lot of actions which it opposed.<sup>21</sup>

INTERVIEWER: It was evident that you were a very effective and persuasive communicator. Being able to effectively communicate both internal and external to your organization was a skill you mastered. You had to keep not only the military informed of your policies and programs but you also had to inform the public of the war effort. I can use as an example of keeping the public informed your Biennial Report for the period July1, 1941 to June 30, 1943. This report was distributed to newspapers and magazines around the country as well as to war plants and military reading rooms. It was highly praised for its detail, style and literary qualities. The New York Times wrote: "General Marshall's report was viewed by many here as one of the most comprehensive and remarkable public documents of the war. Not only did he give insights as to the possible future course of the war both in Europe and the Pacific, but he lifted the curtain of military secrecy on many fascinating historical sidelights of past operations. The Chief of Staff set forth the answers to many questions that a reporter would have been reprimanded for asking at the Secretary of War's press conferences."

**GENERAL MARSHALL**: I [felt at the time] that it [would] be helpful to the immediate future if the [period from July 1941 to June 1943 was] in effect wiped from the slate as to rumors and conjectures. [I wanted to explain] what we did and why we did it. They may agree or not agree but guesswork would no longer be involved and the public, I believe[d], [would] be better prepared to view the great battles to come with a better understanding of all that [was] involved.<sup>23</sup>

[I used many different means of communicating with the public to gain their support both during wartime and peace as well as to keep them informed. I gave radio broadcasts, held press conferences, and gave news releases to and interviews for newspapers and magazines. I was even involved with encouraging the production of motion picture films showing] actual combat scenes involving men, equipment, armored vehicles and weapons in actual operation/. [It seemed that] the best measure which appeared to provide the best incentive to the workers [in industrial plants to increase production was] the showing of films in the plants of the actual conditions under which operations [were] conducted on the various fronts.<sup>24</sup>

[But I have to tell you that I was not always pleased with the press. I remember, I think it was in 1941, that the Washington Times-Herald published a column called Washington Merry-Go-Round which said that three of four Army Commanders, Generals Drum, De Witt, and Lear, would be] "replaced chiefly on the basis of their showing in the field maneuvers.... By younger men with greater tactical ability:"

[This was totally false.] The problem here [was] to avoid having columnists, radio men and the press generally involve us, with deliberate intention, in denials or assertions regarding leading, and frequently baseless statements. It [was] news to them to keep the pot boiling, and it [was] very difficult for us to determine just when to intervene and how to go about it. Anything that suggest[ed] a limitation on the freedom of the press produce[d] an instant and general reaction with a variety of counter accusations, not necessarily relevant to the particular issue....[This] incident [was] an example of destructive press procedure, an article without foundation of fact and calculated to weaken command in the Army at a very critical moment in its development. 26

**INTERVIEWER**: You also communicated up the chain of command directly with the President, keeping him informed of situations as they enfolded.

GENERAL MARSHALL: [Yes, particularly regarding casualties.] I was very careful to send Mr. Roosevelt every few days a statement of our casualties. It was done in a very effective way, graphically and ...in color, so it would be quite clear to him when he had only a moment or two to consider. I tried to keep before him all the time the casualty results, because

you get hardened to these things and you have to be very careful to keep them always in the forefront of your mind. $^{27}$ 

[President Roosevelt and I had a very good working relationship and I felt it was my duty to keep him informed and always tell him the truth. I can give you an example of an instance where I disagreed with the President and told him so to his face. This particular instance occurred during a meeting at the White House attended by] quite an assembly of men and a great many of the New Deal protagonists; [the meeting] had to do with these appropriations we were trying to get of a military way. There was a great difference of opinion as to what it should be. The president, of course, was all for the increase in the air [corps], but he wasn't much for getting the men to man the airships nor for the munitions and things that they required. He was principally thinking at the time of getting airships for England and France. [I remember sitting] on a lounge [chair] way off to the side [in the meeting room. The president finished his presentation and began to go around the room to ask the others their opinions.] Most of them agreed with him entirely, had very little to say, and were very soothing in their comments. He, of course, did the major portion of the talking. He finally came around to me,...and I remember he called me 'George.' I don't think he ever did it again. That rather irritated me, because I didn't know him on that basis. Of course, the president can call you pretty much what he wants to, but nevertheless I wasn't very enthusiastic over such a misrepresentation of our intimacy. So he turned to me at the end of this general outlining.. and said. 'Don't you think so, George?' And I replied, 'Mr. President, I am sorry, but I don't agree with that at all.' I know that ended the conference and the president gave me a very startled look.

When I went out, they all bade me goodbye and said my tour in Washington was over. But I want to say in compliment to the president that that didn't antagonize him at all. Maybe he thought I would tell him the truth so far as I personally was concerned—which I certainly tried to do in all of our later conversations. He thought I was too intent on things, of course, and he was having a very hard time raising the public backing for the money, and there was a debt limitation during these early periods. But my job was to see that the country was armed, if it was possible to do so, which meant large appropriations.<sup>28</sup>

INTERVIEWER: As a strategic leader, you pursued the vision of a country armed and prepared for the next war. In January 1944, Time Magazine named you "Man of the Year" for having transformed a "worse-than-disarmed U.S. into the world's most effective military power." In the article, Time honored you for seven achievements during your time as chief of staff, one of which was recognizing the importance of air power and promoting the air program.<sup>29</sup> Can you elaborate on your vision for the employment of the air arm and the steps you took to promote it?

GENERAL MARSHALL: [I have always had a]...keen interest in the Air establishment...Years ago I was present at a lecture delivered by the Head of the Signal School at Fort Leavenworth. During his talk, he made the startling statement that two brothers named Wright were actually reaching the solution of flight by heavier-than-air machines. I knew nothing of this at the time, having seen no reference to it in the press, and I have never forgotten the profound impression it made on my mind.

Only a little later, I happened to be staying for the night in Washington with a young lieutenant who had made, that very afternoon at Fort Myer, the historic test flight of the Wright plane for its acceptance by the Government. Members of the cabinet, ambassadors and diplomats were present to see the miracle - an effort to fly twenty miles, with two passengers, at a speed of at least forty miles per hour, with a bonus for each additional mile per hour....

And then a little later, during the first concentration of our troops on the Mexican Border in 1911, I was detailed as Assistant to the Chief Signal Officer of the field division. Under that officer were the activities of the two Army planes which then composed our air force - the historic Wright machine and a highly modernized Curtiss production. I turned out every morning at 5:30 in the cold of a Texas winter to avoid a possible calamity, as the planes in taking off barely cleared my tent. I saw the Curtiss crash, and I saw the Wright run through a horse and buggy, or rather I saw the horse run over the machine.

In 1918, while G-3 of the First Army in the Meuse-Argonne operations, two squadrons of planes were placed at my disposal for emergency missions. Then shortly before the Armistice, I watched a group of 164 American planes pass over the German lines. On the morning following the Armistice, I looked over the ground in No-Man's-Land to see the effect of the bombing by that great air armada.

So, by the mere accident of position, I attended the birth and was present during much of the childhood of [the] Air Corps....Professionally, as head of the War Plans Division, I [was] intimately concerned with the development of the Air Corps, and personally I [was] deeply interested in everything pertaining to it.<sup>30</sup>

From the viewpoint of modern scientific and mechanical advances, combined with the powerful effect of public opinion on any action of Congress, we [found] a very special field concerned with the development of the Air Corps. We [knew] pretty well, from examples that reach[ed] back into the earliest recorded history, what a man on foot [could] do. His effectiveness when mounted on a horse [was] well understood (though few nowadays understand the horse). The later phases of ... World War [I] gave us pointed evidence regarding the efficiency of tanks, or mechanized forces as we term[ed] them..; and we [had] witnessed

quite a development since the War in the type and effectiveness of tanks. But great as this latter development [was], it [was] still within the grasp of the average military mind to forecast its practical effectiveness on the battlefield. However, when we [came] to aviation, the development [had] progressed with such leaps and bounds, such unbelievable advances in speed and distance, in altitude, and in size, that it stagger[ed] the imagination, and exercise[d] a profound influence on public opinion as to the requirements for National Defense. The very nature of ... air development and the uncertainty as to what the development [would] be in the future, [made] it difficult to forecast the solution in military preparedness.<sup>31</sup>

Up [until 1944, prior to operation OVERLORD,] I [had] not felt that we [had] properly exploited air power as regards its combination with ground troops. We...lacked planes, of course, in which to transport men and supplies, but our most serious deficiency I [thought was] a lack in conception. Our procedure [was] a piecemeal proposition with each commander grabbing at a piece to assist his particular phase of [an] operation, very much as they did with tanks and as they tried to do with the airplane itself. It [was] my opinion that,[during OVERLORD,] we possess[ed] the means to give a proper application...of air power in a combined operation.<sup>32</sup>

[That was my strategic vision for air power and for the air forces. I can give you a good example of a strategic leader who also exhibited excellent strategic vision and that is again, General Pershing,] who had a great influence on the Army [of] today. He established the prestige of an American Army in conflict with major powers in modern warfare. He established a new General Staff system for handling both affairs in France somewhat similar to the War Department at home and for the Army in actual operations. Upon his return home he exercised a great influence on the form of the National Defense Act of June 4, 1920. Before his retirement as Chief of Staff he laid down the organization and principles for the War Department General Staff which have governed our present organization. He crystallized the appreciation of higher education in the Army, particularly Leavenworth, upon whose graduates he leaned very heavily in France...

As to [strategic] principles and policy laid down by General Pershing [during World War I], [the most important] were his emphatic confirmation of the principle of offensive action, of the principle of open warfare or warfare of movement as compared to trench warfare technique into which the Allied armies had sunk in 1918, his insistence on thorough training in rifle firing for the infantry and the highest possible state of discipline.<sup>33</sup>

The preliminary decision of July 11, 1917, as set forth in [General Pershing's] cablegram of that date, was momentous. Directly from this flowed the vast plans for the foundation and

development of the [Army Expeditionary Forces (A.E.F.)]. No such conception had ever before been attempted either in peace or war, in business or fighting. That [he] had the vision to make this beginning, marks [his] action as one of the great decisions of the A.E.F.

Training for warfare of movement, as directed in the early fall of 1917, was a courageous and far-sighted decision. The long and desperate contest had drawn the Allied commanders too close to the situation day by day, to permit ... proper perspective. But, they had three years experience in major warfare and he had none. He was untried and they were veterans. America was sympathetic to the French and British, [who were] terribly critical of our state of unpreparedness. General Pershing's position in taking a view directly contrary to the Allied leaders, was precarious. His action in suppressing the translation of Petain's printed instructions on "The Offensive Training of Large Units". required rare courage. I am inclined to think that had not the German offensive, opening March 21, 1918, conclusively proved the absolute necessity of training our troops for open warfare, General Pershing might have been forced from command by Allied pressure on Washington....

The continuation of offensive assaults in the Meuse-Argonne battle from October 8<sup>th</sup> to 20<sup>th</sup> ranks as the greatest exhibition of [strategic] leadership displayed by General Pershing during the war. With distressingly heavy casualties, disorganized and only partially trained troops, supply troubles of every character due to the devastated zone so hurriedly crossed, inclement and cold weather, flu, stubborn resistance by the enemy on one of the strongest positions of the Western Front, pessimism on all sides and the pleadings to halt the battle made by many of the influential members of the army, he persisted in his determination to force the fighting over all difficulties and objections. This was the most severe test of the war. The British discounted our effort and criticized our methods; the French did the same; both strove to break up our army by securing detachments of troops. Even American high officials outside the army lent themselves to the clamor. Throughout he stood implacable and drove the army to its great assault, commencing November 1<sup>st</sup>, which reached Sedan, reclaimed the Meuse and brought us to the armistice. Nothing else in General Pershing's leadership throughout the war was comparable to this.<sup>34</sup>

[But getting back to the first part of your comments regarding preparing the nation for war,] I would add this view--my consideration [was always] for the American soldier, to see that he [had] every available means with which to make successful war, that he [was] not limited in ammunition, that he [was] not limited in equipment, and the he [had] sufficient training and medical care; in other words, to see that for once in the history of this country he [was] given a fair break in the terrible business of making war.<sup>35</sup>

INTERVIEWER: Yes, sir, and you did that very well indeed. Am I right in stating that part of the reason you were so successful was that you were, as you stated earlier, a "political soldier"? Can you explain what you meant by this?

**GENERAL MARSHALL:** [Of course. But first let me explain what I did not mean. I did not mean becoming involved in politics and running for office even though there were attempts to make me do so.] The popular conception [at that time] that no matter what a man says, he can be drafted as a candidate for some political office [was] without... force [in] regard to me. I [refused] to be drafted for any political office.<sup>36</sup> My training and ambitions were not political.<sup>37</sup> [I believed that] putting such an idea [of political office] into a man's head [was] the first step toward destroying his usefulness, and....[that] the public suggestion of such an idea, even by mere rumor or gossip, would [have been] almost fatal to my interests. So long as the various servants of the Government in important positions concerned with national defense devote all their time and all their thought to the straight business of the job, all will go well with America, but just as soon as an ulterior purpose or motive creeps in, then the trouble starts and will gather momentum like a snowball.<sup>38</sup>

What I meant by political was interacting with the legislative branch of the government as well as with the president to get the resources that I needed to get the military ready to go to war. I meant] spending many hours before the Senate Sub-Committee on Defense Appropriations in obtaining authorizations for many billions.<sup>39</sup> [I meant having] long conversations with [senators] and preparing letters for [their] signature[s] and arguments for Itheirl tongue[s]. 40 II meant testifying before both Congress and the Senate in support of the Lend-lease bill. I meant applying all powers of persuasion that I possessed in dealing with the president to obtain what was necessary for the war effort. I can offer as an example a meeting I had with the president accompanied by the Secretary of War Morgenthau....and Budget Director Harold Smith. We were attempting to get the president's approval for our strategy for industrial and military preparedness prior to the war. It was, I believe, May 1941, when] we went to see the president who, it was quite evident, was not desirous of seeing us. The conversation through most of the meeting - in fact all of it for a long time -was between the president and Mr. Morgenthau, and he was getting very little chance to state his case. I rather assumed that the president was staging this rather drastic handling of Mr. Morgenthau for my benefit, because they were old friends and neighbors.

At first Mr. Morgenthau talked about the need for an advisory committee for the Council of National Defense, but the president did not favor this on the ground that existing agencies could handle the industrial preparedness effort. Then Mr. Morgenthau got around to military aspects

- military equipment - and the president was exceedingly short with him. Finally, Mr. Morgenthau said, 'Well, Mr. President, will you hear General Marshall?'. The president replied (I remember this most distinctly), 'Well, I know exactly what he would say. There is no necessity for my hearing him at all.' It was a desperate situation. I felt that he might be president but I had certain knowledge which I was sure he didn't possess or which he didn't grasp. I thought the whole thing was catastrophic in its possibilities, and this last cut, [that is, the president's reduction of my previous request for funds] just emphasized the point. Recalling that a man has a great advantage, psychologically, when he stands looking down on a fellow, I took advantage, in a sense, of the president's condition. When he terminated the meeting, I, not having had a chance to say anything, walked over and stood looking down at him and said, 'Mr. President, may-I have three minutes?' Then in a complete change of mood and in a most gracious fashion he said, 'Of course, General Marshall.'

I said, 'Now, first Mr. Morgenthau spoke to you about this civilian organization, [an advisory committee,] to represent all the civil side of these matters. You said that Hopkins would handle one part, ... Morgenthau one part, ....[and you] would handle one part of it. With all frankness, none of you are supermen, and Mr. Morgenthau has no more chance of managing this [whole] thing than of flying. [For example,] we just had lunch and he gave orders he was not to be interrupted. He was interrupted three times by the matter of the closing of the Stock Exchange. He can't possibly grasp all these things. He was [just] trying to get...straight...the enormity of our situation regarding military preparedness, and he wasn't even allowed to do that. If you don't do something like... [appoint the advisory committee] - and do it right away - I don't know what is going to happen to this country.'

'As to the military part, I just came here in the first place about a cut - of something which had previously been approved by the Budget Bureau and turned down in the Congress - which is actually a small sum of money. It seems to us large these days, but it will eventually be considered a small sum. I don't know quite how to express myself about this to the president of the United States, but I will say this, *you have got to do something and you've got to do it today!*'

[Later that evening, Secretary Morgenthau told me], 'You did a swell job and I think you are going to get about 75% of what you want'.<sup>41</sup>

INTERVIEWER: What about after the War? After your retirement from the Army, you were sent to China as a special representative of the President of the United States to mediate in China and work with Chiang Kai-shek. Unfortunately this was not a success. The great success, which took all of your persuasive power not only with both houses of Congress but also with the American people, was the European Recovery Program better known as the

Marshall Plan. Can you explain what you envisioned for the future of Europe after the war and how you built consensus for the plan to aid in its recovery?

GENERAL MARSHALL: [I had to get agreement from both the House of Representatives and the Senate. To do this, I worked closely with Senator Arthur Vandenberg, head of the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, and Representative Charles A. Eaton, Chairman of the House Committee on Foreign Affairs]. Vandenberg...was just the whole show when we got [down to] the actual [working out] of the thing. I used to meet him at Blair House. I didn't go to his office and he didn't come to mine, [but we] would meet over at Blair House. At that time [a writer in] *The New York Times* was attacking me for not having a bipartisan policy...He was profound in his knowledge [but] he didn't know a damn thing. Vandenberg and I were just handling this business. 42

[I had to convince both the House and Senate that my requests for funding for the European Recovery Plan were not based on] light or sentimental grounds but on the highest considerations of national interest which surely included an enduring peace and freedom for the individual. [I had to convince them that] so long as hunger, poverty, desperation, and resulting chaos threaten[ed] the great concentrations of people in Western Europe - some 270 millions - there [would] surely develop social unease and political consequences on every side. [I believed that] left to their own resources there [would] be...no escape from economic distress so intense, social discontents so violent, political confusion so widespread, and hope of the future so shattered, that the historic base of Western civilization, of which we are by belief and inheritance an integral part, [would] take on a new form in the image of the tyranny we [had just] fought to destroy in Germany. The vacuum which the war created in Western Europe [would] be filled by the forces of which wars are made... Durable peace require[d] the restoration of Western European vitality.<sup>43</sup>

[I then had to take the message to the American people to mobilize them and gain their support.] I worked on that as if I was running for the Senate or the presidency. That's what I am proud of, that part of it, because I had foreigners, I had tobacco people, I had cotton people, New York [and] Eastern industrialists, Pittsburgh people, some of them good friends but opposed to the idea, the whole West Coast, [all] going in the opposite direction.... It was just a struggle from start to finish and that's what I am proud of - that...we put it over.

[I spoke to various interest groups to enlist their aid.] The selection of the time and place [for speeches] was largely done on the basis of what the opposition would be, because [it seemed] that all America was opposed to appropriating anything else because of the way the first appropriation right after the war - [the United Nations Relief and the Rehabilitation

Administration funds] - had been wasted. We had Bert McCormick [of the *Chicago Tribune*] leading the fight [against the bill] and putting up a very heavy barrage. I remember Vandenberg said to me, 'You need to belittle [attacks like] this. You think they talk about you. I have to sit up and be called Benedict Arnold.'44

I [also] talked to the representatives of a number of women's organizations about ERP. 'You will put it over,' I said, and then I went into it. My goodness, they went back home and they scared Congress to death in the next twenty-four hours. You never saw such rapid action in your life as I got out of that. I said, 'The men will agree with me but they won't do a damn thing.' This [women's Federation] represented, I think, 10,000 subsidiary little clubs. The [leaders] went [back] to those [clubs] and [then] everybody went after these [congressmen]. It was electric, what happened, just electric.<sup>45</sup>

INTERVIEWER: As a result of your efforts toward the reconstruction of Europe through the Marshall Plan, you were awarded the Nobel Prize for Peace on 10 December 1952. It was noted that this was the first time that the Nobel Peace Prize had been given to a professional military man.

GENERAL MARSHALL: There [was] considerable comment over the awarding of a Nobel Peace Prize to a soldier. I am afraid this [did] not seem quite so remarkable to me as it quite evidently appear[ed] to others...The cost of war [was] constantly spread before me, written neatly in many ledgers whose columns [were] gravestones. I [was] greatly moved to find some means or method of avoiding another calamity of war. While the award [was] individual in nature, it [was], in effect, a tribute to the American people for their unselfish devotion to the welfare of free people everywhere.

INTERVIEWER: Sir, we would like to thank you for spending some time with us today to discuss you views on strategic leadership. You have provided us some food for thought that we will be able to use in the future. Thank you again for being here.

**GENERAL MARSHALL**: My pleasure.

APPLAUSE! APPLAUSE! GENERAL MARSHALL AND INTERVIEWER LEAVE THE STAGE.

#### **EPILOGUE**

General George C. Marshall was a world class strategic leader and examples of how he demontrated his excellent strategic leadership skills are many. He was a political soldier who was able to deal with Congressmen and Senators as easily as he dealt with soldiers. He was in turn greatly respected and trusted by all. He had close working relationships with three American presidents, namely Roosevelt, Truman, and Eisenhower, and with several foreign heads of state including Winston Churchill. He was a great visionary who foresaw the vital nature of air power. His support enabled it to develop to its full potentential. He realized the importance of joint operations and cooperation with the Navy and Air Forces. As a result, he was merciless to any commander who could not work with other services. He was a great communicator and effectively communicated inside and out of both his military and civilian chains of command,. He felt it was his duty to keep all informed, including the American people, whose help he realized was critical to the war effort and to his ability to sell his European recovery plan. He was mentored by some of America's great generals and passed on what he learned to his protégé's.

The impacts of General George Marshall's extraordinary strategic leadership abilities left a lasting mark on history. His skills and abilities ensured a trained, equipped and organized American army was victorious in Europe and the Pacific during World War II. The men who lead that army were, with few exceptions, hand-picked by General Marshall. His vision for Europe after the War that resulted in the Marshall Plan saved the Western Europeans from economic collapse and political turmoil. General Marshall was truly a great strategic military leader and statesman in war and peace.

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### **ENDNOTES**

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- <sup>3</sup> George Marshall, Washington, D.C., to Morris Sheppard, June 5 1940, in <u>The Papers of George Catlett Marshall</u>, Vol 2, eds. Larry I. Bland, Sharon R. Ritenour, and Clarence E. Wunderlin, Jr. (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986), 236
- <sup>4</sup> Operations Division Pamphlet, <u>Combat lessons: Rank and File in Combat: What They're Doing, How They Do it</u>, No 3, Introduction by George C. Marshall, in <u>The Papers of George Catlett Marshall</u>, Vol 4, eds. Larry I. Bland and Sharon Ritenour Stevens (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), 497
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- <sup>13</sup> George C. Marshall, Off-the-Record Remarks to the Governors' Conference, Columbus, Ohio, 21 June 1943, in <u>The Papers of George Catlett Marshall</u>, Vol 4, eds. Larry I. Bland and Sharon Ritenour Stevens (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), 485

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>8</sup> Ibid., 5 April 1957

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>9</sup> Ibid., 6 March 1957, 200-201

- <sup>14</sup> General George C. Marshall, interview by Forrest C. Pogue, 11 April 1957
- <sup>15</sup> George C. Marshall, Off-the-Record Remarks to the Governors' Conference, Columbus, Ohio, 21 June 1943, in <u>The Papers of George Catlett Marshall</u>, Vol 4, eds. Larry I. Bland and Sharon Ritenour Stevens (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), 485
- <sup>16</sup> George C. Marshall, Testimony before the House Appropriations Committee, Washington, D.C., 1 May 1940, in <u>The Papers of George Catlett Marshall</u>, Vol 2, eds. Larry I. Bland, Sharon R. Ritenour, and Clarence E. Wunderlin, Jr. (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986), 201
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- <sup>24</sup> George C. Marshall, Washington, D.C., to Lieutenant General Millard F. Harmon, 4 January 1944, in <u>The Papers of George Catlett Marshall</u>, Vol 4, eds. Larry I. Bland and Sharon Ritenour Stevens (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), 233
- <sup>25</sup> Drew Pearson and Robert S. Allen, "Washington Merry-Go-Round", Washington <u>Times-Herald</u>, 22 October 1941, pg. 8, quoted in <u>The Papers of George Catlett Marshall</u>, Vol 2, eds. Larry I. Bland, Sharon R. Ritenour, and Clarence E. Wunderlin, Jr. (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986), 651

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- <sup>27</sup>General George C. Marshall, interview by Forrest C. Pogue, 22 January 1957, in <u>The Papers of George Catlett Marshall</u>, Vol 4, eds. Larry I. Bland and Sharon Ritenour Stevens (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), 462
- <sup>28</sup> General George C. Marshall, interview by Forrest C. Pogue, 6 March 1957, in <u>The Papers of George Catlett Marshall</u>, Vol 1, eds. Larry I. Bland and Sharon R. Ritenour (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1981), 651
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- <sup>42</sup> General George C. Marshall, interview by Forrest C. Pogue, 19 November 1956, quoted in Forrest C. Pogue, <u>George C. Marshall: Statesman</u>, (New York: Viking Penguin, Inc, 1987), 238
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- <sup>44</sup> General George C. Marshall, interview by Forrest C. Pogue, 20 November 1956, quoted in Forrest C. Pogue, <u>George C. Marshall: Statesman</u>, (New York: Viking Penguin, Inc, 1987), 244-245
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